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# Theodore Roosevelt

As Author and Contributor





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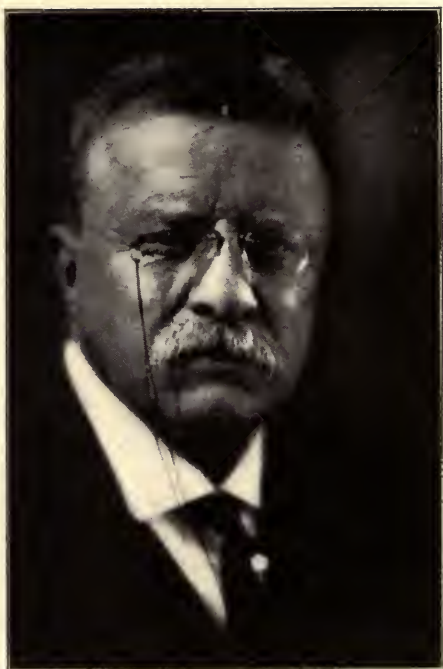


Theodore Roosevelt









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2

# Theodore Roosevelt

As Author and Contributor

By

Robert Bridges

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1919

Memorial Book



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COLONEL ROOSEVELT, as a contributor for twenty years to *Scribner's Magazine*, was one of the most thoughtful, considerate, and efficient authors. When he promised a manuscript for a certain date, that promise was kept absolutely, no matter what intervened.

When he returned from the Spanish-American War and landed at Montauk, he sent word to the magazine that he wanted to talk about his proposed story of "The Rough Riders." Just before he started on that expedition he had said in a brief interview: "If I come back, you shall have the first chance at anything I write."

It was, therefore, on the first afternoon after he returned to his home at Oyster Bay that, on the lawn at Sagamore Hill, we talked over the book which developed into

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"The Rough Riders." It was all perfectly clear in the Colonel's mind. He knew the grand divisions of his story, although he had not written a line. There were to be six articles, and the date was set for the delivery of the first one so that the serial could begin in the magazine promptly.

Very soon he was nominated for Governor of New York. I said to him one day: "I suppose this will interfere with your dates for 'The Rough Riders'?"

"Not at all," he replied; "you shall have the various chapters at the time promised."

As everybody knows, he made a vigorous campaign for Governor of New York, and was elected, and inaugurated in the following January. Notwithstanding this arduous and exciting time, he fulfilled every promise and the book was delivered on time.

It was the same way with his "Oliver Cromwell," which was written while he was Governor of New York. He was a busy

### *As Author and Contributor*

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man, but his literary work was just as complete as though he had devoted his whole time to it.

When he was President he sent for me, and, taking me into his library, opened a drawer in his desk, lifted out a complete manuscript, put it on the desk, and said in effect:

"It isn't customary for Presidents to publish a book during office, but I am going to publish this one."

We then went over together the complete manuscript of "Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter." Some of these papers had been written before. Other chapters were the product of his hunting trips in Colorado and Louisiana while President. The book was ready for the printer, title-page and all.

In all the long and busy years of his Presidency, if you wrote and asked him a question one day, the reply, almost with-

out exception, would be received on the third day, just as soon as a letter could get to Washington, be answered and returned; and all his letters had a personal touch, with characteristic corrections, or the impulsive postscript written with his own hand.

To him the making of a book was a delight. He knew all the machinery of it, and he read his proofs with the accuracy and industry of an expert.

But the literary work that he best enjoyed was writing his "African Game Trails." The whole book, even the preface, was written by his own hand, word for word, in triplicate, in the very heart of Africa. One of the men who was with him said that no matter how arduous the day in the hunting-field, night after night he would see the Colonel seated on a campstool, with a feeble light on the table, writing the narrative of his adventures. Chap-



## *As Author and Contributor*

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ter by chapter this narrative was sent by runners from the heart of Africa. Two copies were despatched at different times. When he got to the headwaters of the Nile one of the chapters was sent from Nairobi and the duplicate was sent down the Nile to Cairo. These blue canvas envelopes often arrived much battered and stained, but never did a single chapter miss.

It was the same way with his "Brazilian Wilderness," and the Colonel used a part of the same stock of paper that he had taken to Africa. Each block consisted of three shades arranged in order, white, blue, and yellow, so that the original and two copies were distinctly marked. Only a few months ago the Colonel said: "I have just used the last of those pads that I took with me to Africa." A special water-tight and ant-proof case had been made for that trip and loaded with enough paper, as it proved, to write half a dozen books.

In civilized countries the Colonel generally dictated his articles and books, but made a most thorough revision of the type-written copy. The stenographer who took his dictation for "Oliver Cromwell," when Roosevelt was Governor, said that he would appear in his study with some books of reference and a pad of memoranda. Then he would start to dictate, and with hardly a pause would complete a chapter of historical narrative which demanded a very careful knowledge of dates and places. This was not as easy as a narrative of personal experiences. Nevertheless, I once read a chapter of it before the Colonel had seen the stenographer's transcript. It could have been printed as it stood, with mere mechanical proofreading corrections.

Colonel Roosevelt took a great interest in the illustrations, the type page, and the cover of his books. He came in one day with a painting made by a friend of one of

## *As Author and Contributor*

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his boys and said: "I think that will make a first-rate frontispiece in color for "A Book-Lover's Holiday in the Open.'" It was the painting of a cougar in a tree on the brink of the Grand Canyon.

His son Kermit, who was with him on his African and Brazilian trips, became an expert photographer and made hundreds of photographs from which both of those books were illustrated. It was a delight to see the father and son together going over this material and making the choice of pictures. Each would recall some incident, and the anecdote and by-play were as good as anything in the printed books.

The Colonel was particularly proud of Kermit's endurance. He said one day that there was not a single one of the negro runners who could outlast Kermit in the African wilds.

In short, Colonel Roosevelt was the ideal contributor, the ideal author to deal with,

*Theodore Roosevelt*

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open to every suggestion and ready to consider any reasonable change. It was an unending pleasure to work with him. He inspired the same sort of loyalty in his literary coworkers as he did among the members of his regiment of soldiers. Those who knew him adored him, even though they often disagreed with him.







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